DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 367 SO 016 056

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TITLE Travel-Study as Part of the Urban Studies Curriculum: Or, Travel Need Not be Travail.
PUB DATE Oct 84
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for Geographic Education (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 17-20, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Course Descriptions; Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Awareness; Experiential Learning; *Field Trips; Foreign Countries; Government (Administrative Body); Higher Education; Problem Solving; Program Development; Program Implementation; *Study Abroad; *Travel; Urban Areas; *Urban Studies

ABSTRACT

Travel-study experiences offered as part of a college level urban studies curriculum are described, and the mechanics involved in setting up such a course experience are discussed. The length of the travel experience varies from a 4-day mini-course involving local travel to a 3-week stay in a foreign country. Objectives are to help students gain a better appreciation of other cultures and countries and to help them understand the organizational structure of the city visited and of particular departments, the interrelationship of official government bodies, the patterns of need and the organization of solutions to those needs faced by the community, and similarities and differences between the city being visited and a city with which the students are familiar. Visits are scheduled with officials in the city, and then students are required to get to know the city for themselves. They must document their experience in a journal/log. Mechanics involve travel arrangements, official contacts, publicity, participant organization, and follow-up. While there have been some problems with the travel-study experiences (e.g., a student was robbed), the overall result has been very positive for both students and faculty. (RM)

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION

1984 ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 17-20, 1984

WESTBURY HOTEL

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

DR. ANDREW K. PRINZ

PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF URBAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT

ELMHURST COLLEGE

ELMHURST, ILLINOIS 60126

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1984

"TRAVEL-STUDY AS PART OF THE URBAN STUDIES CURRICULUM: OR, TRAVEL NEED NOT BE TRAVAIL."

SP 016 056

INTRODUCTION

"People who want to understand democracy should spend less time in the library with Aristotle and more time on the buses and in the subway." Simeon Strunsky. (1879-1948)

Since 1971 I have given a variety of travel study courses. The usual pattern is to offer a four day mini-course each semester to undergraduate day and evening students. The course can be taken for two semester hours of credit. The course runs from Thursday morning to Sunday evening. The size varies from a minimum of fifteen students to a one-time maximum of forty-eight. The average in recent years has been about thirty. During the four day trip I schedule a full complement of meetings throughout the day and evening on Thursday and Friday. I regularly use Saturday morning for a walking tour or city sightseeing trip. Upon the return to campus, the students are expected to do an additional thirty-five hours of research and writing to complete the course.

This type of course lends itself very well to co-operative efforts with related disciplines in the Social Sciences. During the past three years, I have combined with a colleague in Sociology to take students to Toronto and Montreal, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans. In the next year, I anticipate trips to Philadelphia, Los Angeles and SanFrancisco.

On eight occasions since 1971, I have also offered longer courses to Europe, U.S.S.R., China, Japan, and Mexico. These groups are smaller (10 to 15 participants) and usually last about three weeks. The focus is similar to the shorter trips and purposely utilizes a wide variety of transportation modes. These trips can be taken for four semester hours.

The Librarian of Congress, Daniel Boorstin, in his fine work, The Image, notes: "The Old English noun "travel" (in the sense of a journey) was originally the same as travail" (meaning "trouble", "work", or "torment"). The traveler was an active man at work. The tourist, on the other hand, is passive. He goes "sightseeing", expecting everything to be done to him and for him."

The travel-study trips are active and require participation.

OBJECTIVES

The travel-study experiences are designed to meet the educational needs of three general categories of students--1) those interested in urban planning, government, housing and transportation; 2)those interested in human services, police and health care, and 3) those with

a more general wish to "get a feel" for the workings and milieu of the cities visited.

Visits are scheduled with officials in each of the areas mentioned in 1) and 2) above. After exposing the entire group to the transportation and government areas to get an overall understanding of the city, the students are divided into appropriate subgroups. This way, the diverse learning objectives for the entire group can be met.

One of the objectives of travel-study is to gain a better appreciation of other cultures and countries. In class I can talk about different political perspectives and try to provide a difference in understanding between Democracy and Communism. I have found though that a more meaningful understanding develops as you take students from the free world of the U.S. and Western Europe into the Soviet Union. The students quickly come to appreciate the difference between being able to walk anywhere versus restraint, the value of a free press versus controlled news, and the abundance of goods versus the plethora of basic goods available in communist countries. After a trip to the U.S.S.R., one "radical" came back with an attitude of "America love it or leave it!"

I regularly visit Canada and find that the Canadians know a great deal more about our history and government than we know about theirs. While they can name most of our states, how many provinces can we identify? One of the best contrasts that I can articulate is the difference between the Canadian motto, "Peace, Order and Good Government" versus our "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." After spending some time in Toronto or Montreal, the students quickly observe the impact of these distinctions. The subways are graffiti free, there is no smoking in elevators and seat belts are worn. The laws stipulate this and so the Canadians obey these regulations. A little story points out a significant contrast. In the settling of the Canadian West, the Royal Mountain Police went first and then settlers followed. The result was order without violence or murder. You can see the difference when we talk about our movement West.

I am interested in having the students understand 1) the organizational structure of the city and of particular departments, 2) the interrelationship of various official bodies, 3) the patterns of needs and the organization of solutions to those needs faced by the community and 4) the similarities and differences between the city being visited and Chicago and suburbs with which the students are familiar.

The students are required to get out and experience the city for themselves after meeting

the officials and touring the agencies. To this end, I encourage them to walk and utilize public transportation rather than taking taxis. I also allow time for them to schedule activities which are of interest to them.

MECHANICS

Travel Arrangements

The amount of work involved in organizing a successful travel-study experience has discouraged many of my colleagues who at first thought I was getting an "easy course" with the additional fringe benefit of free travel. While I do use a travel agent to make airline and hotel bookings, I do not just turn the matter over to the agent and forget it. First, I specify the location (central to the city) and quality (moderately priced, non-chain, clean). I usually utilize a Frommer's Guide for the city and find several hotels that sound appropriate for the agent to check further. Hotels vary on their special group rates and willingness to set aside a block of rooms.

Even in booking airlines, it is wise to monitor the agent's activities to make sure the agent 1) checks all the airlines, 2) gets the best leader ticket (1 free for every 15 students is common, some airlines also give a ½ ticket for 10 students), and 3) keeps checking for special reductions. On several occasions, by watching the papers, I have learned of reductions that the agent had not seen. I also ask the agent to let me know if there is to be a fare increase so I can book the seats for those students I know are going but do not have all their money in.

With a large group (30 or more) the agent can arrange a bus pick-up and return to the airport. This service is helpful and can include a general tour of the city using a Greyline tour bus for the transportation. With smaller groups, you can use limos for travel to and from the hotel.

Official Contacts

Trying to establish good contacts is the most time consuming aspect. Return visits are less problematic than initial contacts since one has previous experience on which to draw.

For mass transit, the periodical Mass Transit can be used for names of professional organizations and/or the name and address of the general manager in the particular city. If a name is not available, one can address the Public Information Officer for the metropolitan transportation organization. Transit officials worldwide have been tremendously helpful and not one has turned me down. Most are willing to make free public transportation passes avail-

able for the four days of the group's visit. This is a tremendous benefit, allowing students to see much more of the city than they would if they had to pay for rides. I usually schedule the transportation meeting first after arrival, so the students will feel comfortable about travelling around the city. I also request transportation route maps which have proven invaluable in finding our way around town.

With governmental officials, I begin by addressing the mayor or department head, indicating the areas of study I am interested in and requesting assistance. Often, the mayor or department head will arrange to greet the group. Even if that is not possible, administrative assistance will help contact other agency heads and arrange an introductory session with films and handouts showing the city's governmental structure and highlights.

I have found that presentations by planners are useful for all students whether or not they are directly interested in planning as a career. Planners often have helpful information and visual aids on the changes occurring in the city. They sometimes will conduct walking tours of selected areas of the city and even provide entree to housing and community projects. The name of the planning director or commissioner can be obtained from conferences or regional meetings of the American Planning Association.

I have asked our U.S. Senators to arrange for meetings at our Embassies. We have had excellent and stimulating sessions. And, it is good to see the American flag!

Association membership lists and contacts at conferences like this one are additional helpful sources for names and agencies. You can also watch for names of people who present papers at professional meetings on topics in cities you are interested in and contact them. If you can obtain a phone directory for the city, you can call the departments and organizations you are interested in and get names. Finally, both alumni and faculty colleagues can be helpful. In one city, an alumnus was a top aide of the mayor and speeded our processing; in another, a colleague had previously worked in the city to be visited and gave me names of co-workers who were very helpful in presenting a program for the students.

Publicity

"Travel, in the younger sort is a part of education: in the elder a part of experience." Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

To get 25 to 30 individuals to participate in trips requires some "PR" work. You should utilize a display in the college Union Building at registration time, send notices to former participants, announce the trips in your classes and use the college community and alumni

newsletters. I publicize trips in the evening session newsletter. Many adult participants need a fraction of credit. They appreciate both the flexibility of the course for scheduling their time and the reduced cost of group travel to places they have "always wanted to see". (My trips also are available on a non-credit basis so individuals can take a spouse, older children, or a friend.) In addition, I have presented slides and a discussion of some of my trips to the entire faculty in a scheduled Faculty Forum sponsored by the college Faculty Development Committee. Faculty who may have been skeptical of the legitimacy of travel learning have changed their minds upon seeing the academic organization of the experience and they recommend the trips to their advisees.

Organizing the Participants

About 3 weeks before the scheduled trip, you can arrange an organizing meeting with the students who are participating in the trip. At that time, the following tasks can be accomplished:

1) Introduce the group to each other
2) Discuss their responsibilities for the experience
3) Give them the trip instructions and agenda
4) Make sure all money is in
5) Get roommate and subgroup preferences so assignments can be made
6) Hand out materials on the city, a Frommer's Guide and excuse notification slips
7) Make connections within the group for getting to and meeting at the airport
8) Answer questions

This meeting usually takes an hour and is crucial in setting the tone for the trip. You must make sure they know they will have a heavy and full schedule with plenty of walking so they can come prepared. I also encourage them to plan their focus and activities in advance so they can use their "free" time to advantage.

Follow-Up

After I meet with officials, I usually try to give them some momento of our visit--a college key chain, stick pin, mug or pen. Upon my return, I write a formal thank you letter within a week and include student comments and pictures where appropriate. If I know that I will be returning to the city at a specified future time, I tell them in order to keep the contact alive.

Finally, I help students with their analytical papers on an individual basis, sponsor a post-trip picture sharing party, and grade the materials which are due 6-8 weeks after the trip.

PROBLEMS

In organizing travel-study trips, one must remain flexible and ready to deal with the unexpected. So far, in thirteen years, I have not lost any students, but buses which were supposed to pick up the group at the airport have failed to arrive, a taxi driver has blocked our way because I refused his high priced taxi, fog has closed in our city bus tour so thickly that we literally saw nothing (but the driver spoke well and gave useful information), students have not followed directions and almost missed the plane, hotels have not been ready for us--forcing us to leave our luggage in the lobby and go on without changing clothes, a student was robbed of $200 by a female pick-pocket, and so on. One must be ready to handle anything and be of a positive problem-solving temperament.

SUCCESSES

Student Outcomes

"Foreign travel ought to soften prejudices, religious or political, and liberalize a man's mind." Charles B. Fairbanks (1827-1859)

The students who have participated in travel-studies are the most enthusiastic supporters, and they have recommended trips to others. Many individuals participate in more than one trip and encourage their friends to do likewise. They are impressed with being able to meet the officials "behind the scene" and feel for the first time that they are beginning to understand how things work. Students participate who have never been to an inner city, taken public transportation or been away from home, and they literally blossom through the experience. Several students have taken responsibility for organizing their own contacts on subsequent trips. I have had students arrange for personal visits with companies and financial houses, lawyers and courts, and architectural firms.

Further, students who participate in travel-studies develop an appreciation and tolerance for other peoples and their cultures. They see that not all politicians are bad, that not all patronage workers are incompetent, and that all minorities are not dirty and uneducated. They also see that the American way is not the only one that works and that there are common problems and experiences which people the world over are trying to solve. The students return with new respect for our own and other's way of life.

Besides the general experience which the students document in a journal/log, each student must focus on one specific area (planning, transportation, government, housing,

police, health care, social services, etc.) and analyze it in detail in a final 10 page paper. This means that each student must collect additional information from library research in the city, books purchased in local stores on the topic, newspaper articles, etc., in order to complete the topic. This project helps the student formulate their learning concisely and allows them to utilize their observations and reactions in a comparative format as well. I expect students to use materials from other courses in Urban Studies in their analysis, making the project an experiential and applied capstone to their classroom learning.

Faculty and Host Outcomes

As a faculty member, I have greatly benefited from these travel experiences. I have gained information which is invaluable to use in campus classes. I take pictures which are used as illustrations in planning classes, as well as acquiring many anecdotes, examples and handout materials which our hosts share with us.

On the other hand, the hosts enjoy talking with the students. Most of the individuals are not involved with teaching students and are stimulated by this contact. I try to keep contacts alive by sending articles or other materials of interest to the hosts between visits. And since I try to return to the cities every two years or so, bonds form between us so that, while the students are new, the host and faculty can update each other on organizational changes, successes and problems, thus providing continuity. Some hosts join our group for dinner and get to know us on a more informal basis. And some faculty hosts arrange to have my students share a wine and cheese reception and a lecture with their students, which is stimulating for all of us,

CONCLUSION

"Objects which are usually the motives of our travels by land and by sea are often overlooked and neglected if they be under our eye." Pliny the Younger (61-105)

Successful travel-study programs require hours and hours of behind-the-scene work to settle arrangements, contact hosts, publicize the event, organize student participants and follow up. However, there are benefits to both faculty and students which enhance and extend classroom learning through contact with "the real world" and comparison of the known with new city organizations. Students are helped to apply classroom ideas and terms to a "real world" setting and to develop skills in relating to officials, agencies and services in urban environments.

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Dr. Andrew Prinz
Dr. Brenda Forster

SCHEDULE IN TORONTO
October 18-21

Thursday, October 18

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Toronto City Sightseeing
1:45 p.m. - Meet in Hotel Lobby
2:30 p.m. - Meeting with Toronto Transit Commission
1900 Yonge Street, 6th Floor
Mr. Norman Funk (481-4252)
7:00 p.m. - 7:30 - Dinner, Old Spaghetti Factory

Friday, October 19

8:30 a.m. - Meet in Hotel Lobby
9:00 a.m. - Metropolitan Government
Conference Room, City Hall, 2nd Floor
Hon. Dennis Flynn, Metro Chairman
Film on History of Metro
10:00 a.m. - Mr. John Bower, Head Metropolitan Planning
Metro East Group leave for Detention Center
11:00 a.m. - Hon. Thomas Jacobek, Alderman City of Toronto
11:00 a.m. - Metro East Detention Center Tour
Mr. Lavern Smith
Ministry of Correctional Services
2001 Eglinton Avenue East
Scarborough, Ontario (750-3421)
1:30 p.m. - Toronto Police Department Center
Mr. W. J. Urie
Staff Inspector
590 Jarvis Street
Toronto (967-2222)
2:00 p.m. - Ontario Health Insurance Plan Offices
Mr. E. D'Souza
2195 Young Street (Young and Eglington)
Toronto (482-1111)
3:00 p.m. - City Hall Mayor's Office
Hon. Art Eggleton
2nd Floor
4:00 p.m. - Toronto Globe and Mail
444 Front Street West (Front & Spadina)
Mr. John Gray - National Editor
Mr. Ross Howard - City Reporter
585-5213, Attn: Susan Shore

Saturday, October 20

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Meet in Lobby - Walking Tour of Downtown Toronto
or Carry out your own with maps provided.
1:00 p.m. - Free time - You schedule what activities you pursue.

Sunday, October 21

Free Time - You schedule your activities.
9:30 a.m. - Group trip to Niagra Falls. All luggage in lobby 9 a.m.
6:30 p.m. - Leave Hotel for Airport on your own
8:46 p.m. - Leave Toronto American Airlines 310
8:44 p.m. - Arrive Chicago O'Hare snack en route

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TORONTO ASSIGNMENT FRIDAY
October 19, 1984

11:00 Metro East Dentention Center (18) (10 a.m. leave, return 2 p.m.)

3:00 City Hall Mayor's Office — 4:00 Toronto Globe

Nancy Baumgarten
Jennifer Foley
Cathy Gagnon
Chris Goeres
Dan Goeres
Joe Hinkhaus
Tim Konczyk
Dave MacKenzie
Thomas Magdzierz
Jim Malechi
Denise Marusarz
Gina Saviano
Regina Stella
Greg Strasser
Bob Windisch

1:30 Toronto Police Department (10) — 4:00 Toronto Globe

Mike Benka
Debra Bollig
Marino Cecchi
Keith Lopez
Vi Mason
Kathy Roche
Janis Smith
Steve Stasiuk
Steve Tisdall
Kerry Trytek

2:00 Ontario Health Insurance (14) — 4:00 Toronto Globe (if possible)

Kimberlyn Anderson
Chuck Austin
Joe Bassett
Pete Carzoli
Mario Cervantes
Bill Coniff
Bev Frick
Brenda Forster (Leader)
Margaret Graham
Diana Mansel
Diane Prinz
Ron Stevens
Kathleen Yallop
Jim Yallop